



South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



RIGGS HIGH SCHOOL VETERANS DAY PROGRAM SELECTED AS REGIONAL SITE

A Veterans Day program that first started for Pierre Riggs High School students, and which over the years has been expanded to include veterans and the community of Pierre has received federal recognition from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The 2012 T.F. Riggs Veterans Day program has been selected as a Veterans Day Regional Site. Each year, the Veterans Day National Committee reviews submissions from across the nation that represent fitting tributes to America's heroes. This is the first year that a South Dakota community has been selected and it is the only such recognized program in South Dakota, North Dakota, Iowa, Montana, Nebraska and Wyoming for 2012.

Riggs started their program ten years ago as a way to recognize a former teacher who finally received military medals due him that had been misplaced. Until two years ago, the program, held at the Riggs High School Theatre, was held either the day before or day after Veterans Day because there was no school on the actual holiday. But starting in 2010, the school district began having school on Veterans Day, allowing the students to be active participants in the event which includes readings, speeches and songs.

The T. F. Riggs 2012 Veterans Day program will be held at 10:45 am on Monday, November 12 at the T.F. Riggs Theater in Pierre.

The "Fallen Heroes Banners" will be on display in the lobby of the theater on November 12 as well.

Inside this issue:

VSO Conference and Recognition Awarded	2
Secretary of AF Visits SD Guardsmen	3
Peck Retires After 31 Years of Service	3
Women Veterans Retreat	4
SDNG Leaders Visit Suriname	5-6
Upcoming Events	7



VSO'S RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR LEADERSHIP

This week, the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs conducted their annual training for all County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers in South Dakota. This year's Veterans Benefits Conference focused on: women veterans programs and services, visual impairment programs, consolidated patient account centers, tele-health, processing claims, voc-rehab, presumptive disabilities, and dependency issues. Updates were also provided by the SD Department of Veterans Affairs, Dakota's Regional Office, Black Hills VA Health Care System, Sioux Falls VA Health Care System, the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, the Veterans Bonus program, the Department of Revenue, and the Department of Public Safety.

The conference assists VSOs in understanding the ever-changing way the VA operates and provides a forum for VSOS to exchange ideas, while learning from each other.

During the conference, leaders among the veteran service network were recognized for their strong dedication to serving veterans and their families. During the Monday evening awards ceremony, Steve Harding, Deputy Secretary, and Charles Claussen, Director, for the Department of Veterans Affairs, show-cased each of the recipients accomplishments and presented them with their honors.

Tom Gohn, Brown County Veterans Service Officer, received the Jim Melgaard Award that distinguished him as the 2012 Veterans Service Officer of the Year.

Gordon Richard, Spink County Veterans Service Officer, was awarded the 2012 Robert Lindblad Award that distinguished him for excellence in outreach.

Mike Holzhauser, Brookings County Veterans Service Officer, was presented the 2012 Les Mord Award that distinguished him for excellence in education.

Jon Gohn, Veterans Service Officer for the Department's Claim Office in Sioux Falls, was awarded the 2012 Glenn Green Advocacy Award and was recognized for his ability to navigate claims.

Retirees Jerry Lolley, Charles Kentch and Karen Peck were recognized by the County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers Association for their respective years of service to South Dakota's veterans.

The men and women honored at this year's conference exemplify the commitment and dedication that the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and the County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers provide to our South Dakota veterans and their families each and every day.



SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE VISITS SOUTH DAKOTA GUARDSMEN

Secretary of the Air Force Michael B. Donley visits members of the South Dakota Air National Guard's 114th Security Forces Squadron during their visit to Southwest Asia Aug. 24, 2012.

Donley was touring the region to get a first-hand look at military operations and had the opportunity to visit with airmen to discuss their concerns about decisions they would have to make as the Air National Guard's future budget plans play a significant role in their careers.

The 114th SFS, based out of Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls, S.D., has been deployed since April and has been providing law enforcement, troop escort and security work within a base in Southwest Asia.



PECK RETIRES AFTER 31 YEARS OF SERVICE TO SOUTH DAKOTA VETERANS

Karen Peck, office administrator for Beadle and Sanborn County Veterans Service Office, retires Friday, August 31, after 31 years of service.

A reception was held for Karen at the Beadle County Courthouse on Friday, August, 24. Karen was also recognized by the County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers Association this week in Pierre.

During her tenure, Karen trained and assisted three county veterans service officers—Harold Markey, Robert Lindblad and Ken Lindblad.

We wish Karen the very best in her retirement and thank Karen for dedicating her life to supporting South Dakota's veterans.



WOMEN VETERAN'S RETREAT

The VA Black Hills Health Care System (BHHCS) specialized Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Outpatient Treatment Program (PCT) will host a semi-annual women Veteran's retreat, October 19-21, 2012. The retreat will be held at the Fort Meade Campus, two miles east of Sturgis.

The PCT staff takes a holistic approach to veteran's treatment and addresses psychological, physical, social and spiritual issues related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The semi-annual women's retreats were developed as part of the VA's rural health care initiative, "serving the underserved".

The retreat, beginning at noon on October 19, is for women veterans of all eras diagnosed with PTSD and female family members of male veterans diagnosed with PTSD. The weekend retreats offer a condensed psycho educational, experiential format that educates participants about the debilitating symptoms of PTSD, effects on the family, with a particular emphasis on developing healthier coping strategies and increasing one's social support network.

"The PCT Women's Retreat in its 19th year, seeks to help participants examine some of the basic questions in their lives," said Cathy Edler, Addiction Therapist for the PCT Program and Retreat Coordinator. "The volunteer facilitators and participants build a community of people who are willing to take time to support each other. We provide a safe place to explore issues and allow you to come up with your own answers."

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Charitable Trust has graciously bestowed a yearly grant for the retreat

program. This funding helps to cover meals and lodging expenses for all eligible participants. The grant does not cover transportation. Please check with your local VA medical center about travel eligibility.

Only new participant applications will be accepted, as seating is limited to 20 participants and is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Participants must be screened and pre-register by phoning the PCT Program at 720-7449 or 1-800-743-1070, extension 7449. Travel eligibility inquiries should be directed to 720-7103.



SDNG LEADERS VISIT SURINAME

Senior leaders from the South Dakota National Guard traveled to the South American country of Suriname, Thursday, Aug. 23 for a series of meetings with government and military leaders as part of its State Partnership Program.

The National Guard's 65-nation State Partnership Program provides unique partnership capacity-building capabilities to combatant commanders through partnerships between U.S. states, territories, and the District of Columbia and foreign countries.

The SPP supports U.S. national interests and security cooperation goals by engaging partner nations through military, social, political and economic conduits at the local, state and national level.

The South Dakota and Suriname partnership was formally established in August of 2006. Since then, numerous exchanges have taken place where South Dakota service members travel to Suriname and vice versa to complete in various military training.

"South Dakota National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are able to come over and work within their military specialties, providing them with hands-on training and return to South Dakota with a great deal of personal satisfaction, knowing they helped make life better for the people of Suriname," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard.

Some of examples of recent training projects South Dakota Guardsmen and women took part in include building a clinic, refurbishing clinics and schools and conducting medical exercises.

"I also hope our Guardsmen and women leave with a deeper appreciation for the things they take for granted living in South Dakota and the United States," Reisch said.

In addition to the adjutant general, the South Dakota National Guard's senior leader visit included: Brig. Gen. Ted Johnson, director of the Joint Staff; Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Zimmerman, state command sergeant major; and Chief Warrant Officer 5 Darla Crown, command chief warrant officer.

South Dakota's senior leaders were able to make several stops in Suriname that included the U.S.

Embassy, the Ministry of Defense, the Chief of Defense Office, the Brazilian Defense Attaché Lt. Col. Angelo Brait Junior, where the Suriname military was recognized at the Brazilian Soldier Day, as well as the residence of U.S. Ambassador John Nay.

Reisch and members of his staff were able to not only thank the ambassador but also read an executive proclamation from Governor Dennis Daugaard declaring Aug. 24, 2012, as John R. Nay Day in South Dakota. (Continued on next page).



SDNG LEADERS VISIT SURINAME (CONTINUED)

"Together, we've made significant impacts on humanitarian assistance, disaster relief preparedness, security and military police training, communications and logistics," Nay said to service members from Suriname and South Dakota attending an appreciation event at his home. "Building clinics, helping with educational institutions, among other things, and it's something we can be proud of because we worked on these things together."

"We are partnered with a state that is really committed, and active, and cares, and really goes the extra mile to make sure this program works," Nay said. "They've established a relationship with the host government, with Suriname, such that Suriname is happy to cooperate with South Dakota. We want to continue this relationship and continue to strengthen it and I want to thank everyone from South Dakota for traveling here to be with us today."

Reisch said spending time with Suriname's Minister of Defense Lamure Latour and Chief of Defense Col. Hedwig Gilaard was also an important part of the trip down here.

"Since Mr. Latour and Col. Gilaard were appointed, the state partnership with Suriname has been taken to new heights," said Reisch. "They both acknowledge the partnership is a good thing for Suriname and the defense forces here."

In a July meeting with Latour in South Dakota, Reisch said areas were identified that Suriname would like to focus on, areas that were priorities for the new leadership team. "He made it a point to tell me that they really felt the partnership is a two-way street and in addition to the South Dakota National Guard helping them in the areas that they identified, they intended to also have a benefit back to the South Dakota National Guard," Reisch said. "And without question that has happened."

"Col. Gilaard told me he feels very much a sense of warmth and friendship with the South Dakota National Guard, and I feel the same way about the people of Suriname that we've worked with," Reisch said. "The partnership is very healthy and it continues to impress me that each year we are able to take this partnership to a new level."



Upcoming Events

Sept. 7—SD Veterans Park Dedication—Chamberlain (Exit 263) (2:00 pm)
Sept. 11—Stand Down—Wagner National Guard Armory—610 E. SD HWY 46 (10:00 am—2:00 pm)
Sept. 14—Stand Down—Watertown
Sept. 21—Stand Down—Sioux Falls - VFW— 3601 S. Minnesota Ave. (9:00 am—3:00 pm)
Sept 21—POW MIA DAY
Sept. 22—SDNGEA Veterans March—Northern Black Hills
Sept. 25—Stand Down—Aberdeen Civic Center—203 S. Washington (2:00 pm—7:00 pm)
Sept. 25 Pierre Homeless Connect
Sept. 26—Women Veterans Stand Down—Sturgis Armory (Junction Ave /Main St) 2:00 pm—6:00 pm
Sept. 30—Gold Star Mothers Day
Oct. 19—SFVAHCS Women Veterans Conference—Sioux Falls Holiday Inn City Centre

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